

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please insert the following paragraph after the paragraph starting at page 3, line 1:

Figure 6 is a plan view of the dampener and spring elements of Figure 5 according to one embodiment of the present invention.

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 3, line 6, with the following:

Referring to Figures 1 and 2, there are shown partial views of a steering wheel 10 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Steering wheel 10 has a core 12 with a substantially circular rim 13. The core 12 is preferably die cast or machined from metal. A channel 11 ~~is~~ ⁴⁴is preferably formed within the rim 13 for placement of a dampening element as explained below. A dampening element 14 is secured about or within rim 13 and is preferably positioned at least partially within channel 11, and secured therein. In a preferred embodiment, the steering wheel core is die cast aluminum or magnesium, and is formed as a unitary core member having a plurality of spokes (not shown) connecting core 12 to a central body (not shown), and mounted to a vehicle steering system in a conventional manner. When fully assembled, steering wheel 10 is preferably covered with a known covering material, for example plastic, leather, or fabric. Securing dampening element 14, preferably formed of a relatively dense material, to rim 13 increases the moment of inertia of the steering wheel as well as the rotational mass moment of inertia, increasing its resistance to rotational vibration. It should be appreciated that actually providing a channel 11 in rim 13 is not critical for purposes of the present invention, however, a channel helps in positioning and retaining the dampener weight, and thus represents a preferred embodiment. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that securing dampener 14 “about” rim 13 encompasses a wide variety of securing means, and it is not necessary that dampener 14 be actually attached to rim 13 itself.

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 8, line 26, with the following:

In yet another embodiment, a steering wheel 310 as shown in Fig. 5 includes at least one spring member 316 and preferably a plurality of spring members 316 positioned about the periphery of a dampener 314, thereby effectively springing the mass or the dampener 314. As in the other embodiments, the dampener 314 may be a full ring (such as the one shown in Fig.

6) housed within a channel 311 of the steering wheel core or rim 312. In this embodiment, the mass 314 is preferably but not necessarily, formed from a material denser than the steering wheel core 312 wherein the mass 314 might be formed from lead, zinc, or tungsten, for example, and the core might then be formed from carbon steel or steel. Alternatively, the mass 314 might be two half circles positioned in opposite halves of the steering wheel 310. As an alternative, ~~Or,~~ the mass 314 might comprise a plurality of segments oriented symmetrically about the core 312 and within the core channel 311. At least one spring member 316 is positioned about the periphery of the mass 314, in intimate contact therewith. In a preferred embodiment, a plurality of "O"-rings or polymeric spring members 316 is snugly and symmetrically oriented about the mass 314 periphery (such as seen in Fig. 6). A sleeve 318, is preferably formed from a rigid material or polymer such as polyvinylchloride and encapsulates or insulates the mass and spring assembly 320 during the steering wheel foam mold process. An inner wall 322 of the sleeve 318 additionally provides a torsional surface wherein an outer surface(s) 324 of the spring member(s) 316 interfaces therewith and thus exerts a torque on the spring member 316 as vibrations occur during vehicle operation. The dampener 314 may be rotationally fixed to the rim 313 or core 312 as described relative to other embodiments, by foam mold for example.